MAIN STREET HANDBOOK

SEMCOG

SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



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Introduction

What is the Handbook?

The Main Street Handbook and accompanying Main Street Checklist are resources designed to support local communities in revitalizing, enhancing, and/or establishing a main street district. These tools connect users to SEMCOG's planning and development resources, while also offering guidance on additional external support available to municipalities.

The Handbook complements the Checklist by providing detailed explanations, context, and examples for each item. Together, they serve as a practical framework for communities to create vibrant main streets.

Why Main Street?

Not all commercial areas are—or should be—main street districts. A main street or downtown district typically serves as the cultural and social heart of a community. These areas are characterized by a unique land use context that encourages vibrancy, walkability, outdoor activity, and a mix of uses.

Main street districts are intentionally designed as gathering places, with land use patterns that reflect and support this purpose. Increasingly, people want to live near or have access to lively, well-designed downtowns. This demand is one of the key reasons SEMCOG developed this resource. The handbook connects communities to essential resources related to transportation, public space, housing, and sustainability—all of which intersect with main street and downtown planning and vibrancy.

"Main Street" vs. Downtown

This handbook uses the terms "main street" and "downtown" interchangeably. In smaller municipalities, the main street and downtown typically refer to the same area—often the central hub of the community. In larger cities, however, there may be multiple areas with main street characteristics, each with its own unique cultural and historic significance. This handbook addresses all types of main streets, including traditional small town main street, multiple main street-style districts in larger urban areas, and planned or developing main streets.



Main Street America uses a Four-Point Approach to Community Transformation: Economic Vitality, Design, Organization, and Promotion. This handbook emphasizes SEMCOG resources and places a strong focus on placemaking, land use, transportation, and infrastructure—key elements that align with the Design pillar. The Main Street America Transformation Strategy graphic is used here with the permission of the National Main Street Center, Inc.

Pedestrian Experience and Safety

Speed and Crossings

CHECKLIST

POSTED SPEED LIMITS ARE BETWEEN 25 AND 30 MPH.

A successful main street encourages people to linger, explore multiple shops and restaurants, and enjoy outdoor spaces—whether dining at a sidewalk café or strolling with others. To support this kind of vibrant, pedestrian-friendly environment, traffic must move at slower speeds.

When vehicle speeds exceed 30 mph, the resulting noise and safety concerns make it difficult to host placemaking events, support outdoor dining, or foster casual social interactions.[1]

CHECKLIST

TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED TO KEEP PREVAILING SPEEDS BELOW 30 MPH.



The Livernois-McNichols Main Street in Detroit was recently redesigned with large sidewalks, giving ample space for outdoor dining, a clear pedestrian path, a wide planter/furniture zone, and separated bike lanes.

[1] 2020, City Limits: Setting Safe Speed Limits in Urban Streets, NACTO.

The presence of a posted speed limit on a main street does not guarantee compliance by drivers. In many cases, motorists travel at speeds aligned with the road's design characteristics rather than the legally designated limit. This often results in a discrepancy between the posted speed and the prevailing speed — defined as the rate at which most vehicles are moving. If a downtown area has a posted speed limit of 30 miles per hour but a prevailing speed of 40 miles per hour, the street environment becomes unsuitable for pedestrians to comfortably spend time on sidewalks, enjoy recreational activities, or partake in placemaking initiatives. In such a situation, it is important to plan for ways to bring the prevailing speed down to at least 30 miles per hour.

To reduce vehicle speeds and create a safer environment, consider design strategies such as reducing the number of travel-lanes, adding street trees to visually narrow the roadway, adding curb extensions, or reducing the width of lanes, which ideally should be no wider than 12 feet in a main street context. SEMCOG's Multimodal Tool can be used to explore possible road reconfigurations, such as road diets, as shown in the example on the next page.



Colorful crosswalks enhance pedestrian safety by increasing driver awareness. This example in Mount Clemens also incorporates a designated bike crossing, supporting safer multimodal travel.

Pedestrian Experience and Safety





Using Streetmix, model the existing geometry of your roadway.

Using Streetmix, model the geometry you would like to see along the roadway.

SEMCOG's free Multimodal Tool highlights five classifications, including main streets. The Streetmix feature allows exploration of potential amenities and buffers, such as wider sidewalks and street trees. In this example, an existing roadway with an 84-foot right-of-way is reimagined to include wider sidewalks, trees, separated bike lanes, and a center turn lane. Reducing the number of travel lanes and adding trees, as shown above, also helps calm traffic and lower prevailing speeds.

If the main street has a prevailing speed that is too high, consider developing a long-term traffic calming plan. Begin by partnering with transportation agencies. For guidance on how to begin, refer to the implementation section.

CHECKLIST

CROSSWALKS ARE SPACED AT LEAST EVERY 400 FEET—OR MORE FREQUENTLY IF NEEDED—TO SUPPORT SAFE AND CONVENIENT WALKING BETWEEN DESTINATIONS.

Frequent crosswalks are essential in main streets—they make walking easier and encourage people to visit multiple destinations. A key part of the downtown experience is the ability to stroll, browse, and explore. If traffic is fast and crosswalks are spaced too far apart, that sense of freedom and enjoyment is lost. People may simply visit one location and then leave, rather than linger and explore.

Adding a crosswalk to a main street requires careful planning and investment. The process typically involves engineering review and design and may require approval from the county or the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), depending on road ownership. To find out who owns the road in the downtown or main street, use SEMCOG's Road Jurisdiction Map.

To ensure long-term success, crosswalks should be included in broader infrastructure plans. In flood-prone areas, curb extensions with green infrastructure can serve dual purposes by reducing crossing distances and helping manage stormwater by absorbing rain.

CHECKLIST

IF NEEDED, MEDIANS AND PEDESTRIAN REFUGE ISLANDS ARE PRESENT TO FACILITATE SAFE CROSSING.

Pedestrian Experience and Safety

Two travel lanes – one in each direction – are common in many main streets and makes crossing relatively easy. If there are more than two travel lanes, crossing can feel intimidating and discourage people from walking across, limiting leisurely walking and shopping. For example, a customer dining at a restaurant may be less inclined to visit an ice cream shop across the street if crossing feels unsafe. Medians that have a crossing area – called pedestrian refuge islands – help with safety and provide a more walkable area. Several main streets in the region use this approach, including downtown Clawson and Kerrytown in Ann Arbor.



This pedestrian refuge island in the Kerrytown District of Ann Arbor allows pedestrians to focus on one direction of traffic at a time and to wait in the center if needed.

Sidewalks and Buffers

CHECKLIST

THERE ARE WIDE SIDEWALKS IN THE CORE AREA. IN CERTAIN SECTIONS, THEY ARE AT LEAST 10-25 FEET WIDE.

Benefits of wide sidewalks include ample room for large groups walking in multiple directions, separation distance between pedestrians and automobile traffic, and room for amenities including trees and outdoor seating. There is a relationship between downtown vibrancy and the quality and size of the sidewalks.

According to the FHWA, the width of the sidewalk corridor is one of the most significant factors in determining the type of pedestrian experience that the sidewalk provides. Many local revitalization efforts of downtowns and main streets include improvements to the sidewalks, such as the widening of sidewalk corridors. Local examples include the Livernois-McNichols Main Street in Detroit and Auburn Road in downtown Auburn Hills.



Auburn Road in downtown Auburn Hills has areas where the sidewalk widens, to give ample space for outdoor dining (left), a pedestrian zone (center), and a wide planter/furniture zone (right). This section of the downtown is 45-feet from building façade to the street.

Pedestrian Experience and Safety

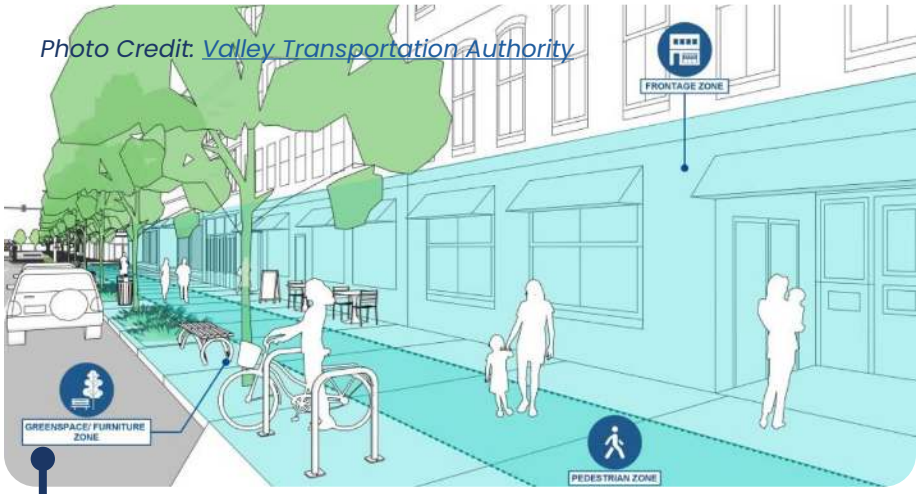


Photo Credit: Valley Transportation Authority

The planter/furniture zone provides spaces for utilities, such as light posts, sidewalk furniture, trees and green infrastructure, and other sidewalk amenities.

CHECKLIST

THERE IS A BUFFER BETWEEN PEDESTRIANS ON THE SIDEWALK AND AUTOMOBILE TRAFFIC, SUCH AS A ROW OF TREES OR PARKED CARS.

Key to pedestrian experience along any roadway is the presence of an adequate buffer, which should separate pedestrians from traffic. Consider the experience of a parent walking with a child along a main street with minimal separation from high-speed traffic.

This type of environment is not conducive to walking. In general, pedestrians will only walk in this environment when it is absolutely necessary to get from one place to another, not when there is a choice. Because main street districts are designed to be cultural and economic hubs of the community, they must be attractive places to gather.

To create a physical separation between pedestrians and moving traffic, traditional main street contexts typically include on-street parking, which not only offers convenient access to local shops but also serves as a protective buffer. Additionally, frequent street trees, planters, and other physical elements can enhance both safety and comfort.



The parked cars act as a safety buffer for pedestrians.



The planter box is used to separate the automobile traffic from the main street pedestrian zone.

Pedestrian Experience and Safety



Implementation

- **Identify Road Ownership** – Use SEMCOG's Road Jurisdiction Map to determine if a road is owned by a local, county, or state agency. This will help identify necessary partners for approving changes to the right-of-way.
- **Engage Stakeholders** – Convene community members and relevant agencies to set priorities—such as improving pedestrian safety or calming traffic. For non-local roads, expect multiple planning iterations to balance goals with regional transportation standards. If needed, SEMCOG can assist with introductions to the appropriate authority.
- **Assess Safety and Traffic Speeds** – Contact SEMCOG for assistance. Existing data on prevailing speeds may be available, or guidance can be provided for conducting speed studies.
- **Conduct a Walking Audit** – Evaluate the pedestrian experience firsthand by using a walking audit toolkit.
- **Update Planning Documents** – Incorporate desired changes into official plans such as the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), Master Plan, or Downtown Plan.
- **Prepare for Grant Opportunities** – Develop a clear plan for road and streetscape improvements to strengthen future grant applications.
- **Plan for Reconstruction** – Anticipate road reconstruction projects and plan several years in advance to support coordinated infrastructure efforts and cost-effective implementation. Coordinate early with utilities and property owners.

Resources

- SEMCOG's Multimodal Tool – Test complete street designs in different land use contexts, including Main Street. Add/edit amenities such as sidewalks and planting strips.
- Planning Assistance Program – SEMCOG's grant for local projects advancing regional plans. Past awardees include downtown streetscape plans.
- Transportation Alternatives Program – Competitive SEMCOG grant funding bikeways, walkways, and stormwater projects.
- Navigating Main Streets as Places – Handbook by Main Street America and Project for Public Spaces on transportation and streetscape design in Main Street districts.
- AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit – Free resource to assess and report street, intersection, or neighborhood walkability and safety.
- MDOT Road Diet Checklist – Form for evaluating potential road diets of MDOT trunklines. Local roads can use the FHWA Road Diet Informational Guide.
- MDOT User Guide for Pedestrian Crossings – This guide assists in determining the type of crossing needed in an area, based on characteristics.
- USDOT Guide for Improving Pedestrian Safety at Uncontrolled Crossing Locations – Publication addressing safety issues at uncontrolled crossings.

Land Use and Zoning

Public Gathering Space

CHECKLIST

THERE IS AT LEAST ONE PUBLIC SPACE OR PLAZA DIRECTLY ADJACENT TO THE DISTRICT AND VISIBLE FROM THE SIDEWALK. THIS SPACE IS HIGHLY VISIBLE TO BOTH PEDESTRIANS AND MOTORISTS AND CENTRALLY LOCATED.

A well-designed gathering space is essential for hosting both formal events and informal activities. These spaces can accommodate a variety of events, such as small markets, live music performances, pop-up shops, and cultural celebrations. Equally important are the everyday uses—places for sitting, resting, eating, and observing the flow of people.

In a main street context, visibility and proximity to sidewalks and streets are critical for public safety and vitality. A successful public space draws energy from the street, making its relationship with the surrounding environment a key design consideration.



Campus Martius Park in Detroit has been thoughtfully reimagined through partnerships with the Downtown Detroit Partnership (DDP) with planning help from the Project for Public Spaces (PPS). The redesigned space prioritizes usability and people-centered planning over aesthetics alone.

Design elements to consider include usability, variety, and seasonal comfort. Design spaces for people to use—not just admire from a distance. Usable spaces foster vibrancy and activity. Consider types of activities, such as meeting with friends and associates, sitting alone and resting, or eating a meal. Plan the space to accommodate practical considerations. In regions with distinct seasons, it is essential to offer sun exposure during cooler months and shaded areas during warmer ones. These features encourage longer visits and year-round use. Movable chairs are especially beneficial, allowing users to adjust their seating based on comfort.

Campus Martius Park in downtown Detroit and Kellogg Park in downtown Plymouth are excellent examples. Both are centrally located and highly visible, with building facades oriented towards the park. They are surrounded by active sidewalks and a mix of uses, contributing to their dynamic and welcoming atmosphere.



Situated in downtown Plymouth, Kellogg Park benefits from its direct integration with surrounding businesses. Active frontages enhance the park's vitality, contribute to public safety through increased pedestrian presence, and enjoy the aesthetic and recreational value the park provides. This central placement fosters a mutually supportive relationship between the park and its retail context.

Land Use and Zoning

Spacing and Mix of Businesses

CHECKLIST

A VARIETY OF BUSINESSES ARE LOCATED NEARBY, CREATING A VIBRANT MIX OF USES. STOREFRONTS ARE FREQUENT AND CLOSELY SPACED ALONG THE STREET.

In a main street, a compact and varied mix of uses is essential to creating a vibrant environment. Closely spaced buildings with active storefronts support convenience, encourage exploration, and contribute to the overall energy of the area.

Large gaps—such as surface parking lots or wide side setbacks—diminish visual interest and disrupt the continuity that defines successful downtowns. To foster a true downtown character, buildings should be positioned close together and offer a wide range of engaging uses within a short walking distance.

Many communities are seeking to transform general commercial corridors into a main street-style environment, particularly in communities lacking a traditional downtown or main street.





Downtown Chelsea features a high concentration of storefronts within a walkable area along Main Street. Facades typically range from 20 to 30 feet in width—common among traditional downtowns—and each storefront offers a distinct architectural character.

If this is the case, review the zoning ordinance with a professional to see if the ordinance allows for traditional "main street-style" development. Ordinances can intentionally or unintentionally prohibit the type of small-scale development style that attracts people to main street, such as small shops close to the street with small footprints and varied styles. In this case, a land use study and zoning rewrite may be necessary.

The zoning code should allow for a mix of uses including retail, office and housing in the district. Public uses, such as government buildings, post offices and parks, when located nearby, also benefit the area by providing a diversity of users that can support downtown businesses.

It is not uncommon for storefronts in the core to be only 20 feet wide, which is equivalent to about three seconds of walking time. This design means pedestrians encounter a new storefront or destination every few steps, creating a dynamic and engaging streetscape.

Land Use and Zoning



Madison Heights recently initiated two coordinated efforts to revitalize its downtown: updating the zoning code and redesigning the streetscape.

The photo above shows the newly designed streetscape, which was celebrated with a festival. Prior to these changes, the downtown area had not seen a comprehensive zoning update since 1972 and was lacking provisions specific to a traditional downtown district.

In 2024, the city adopted a new zoning ordinance designed to support a downtown-style built environment. As an aid to future developers, the ordinance includes renderings of desired building styles, to give a general idea of the look and style of buildings appropriate for the downtown. This visual aid serves as an effective tool for communicating expectations and streamlining the approval process.





Mixed-Use Building Types are subject to the following design standards:

Mixed Use Building Type – Illustrated Design Standards:

1. Traditional building façade treatments (including masonry reliefs and/or motifs) shall be provided along Principal Frontages and Secondary Frontages. Side and rear entrances shall be subordinate. A main entrance at the corner may substitute for that listed above.
2. Main entrance doors shall remain operational during business hours.
3. Main level shall be accessible at grade.
4. There shall be a minimum of 50% window glass on front building elevations.
   a) The maximum distance between any two windows shall be 5 feet.
   b) The maximum distance between a window and the edge of the wall shall be 10 feet.
   c) All first story windows and windows facing towards a public street shall be designed so that the entire window allows at least 80% Visible Light Transmission (VLT).
5. Where the building is set back five (5) or less feet from the front property line, the main entrance shall be recessed a minimum of 3'-0" along the Principal Frontage. The main entrance shall be along principal frontage or at the corner of two frontages.
6. A minimum of one additional horizontal molding or accent material band projection shall be provided, casting a secondary horizontal shadow line, dividing the façade into layers.
7. Garage doors shall be permitted along frontages and rear of building. A minimum of 50% of garage doors along frontages shall be transparent to foster a pedestrian experience. Front-facing garage doors shall primarily serve as an amenity to retail/commercial-oriented uses rather than for loading/unloading.

An excerpt from Madison Heights zoning ordinance.

Land Use and Zoning

Housing

CHECKLIST

HOUSING IS INCORPORATED WITHIN THE DISTRICT AND IS LOCATED ON THE SECOND FLOOR AND ABOVE, OR ON NEARBY STREETS WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF MAIN STREET.

Post–World War II zoning practices led many communities to separate housing from main street areas. This approach can limit activity in business districts and downtown vibrancy. As a result, many municipalities are actively working to reverse this separation.

While ground-floor residences on main street are generally avoided due to privacy concerns, upper-floor apartments and homes within walking distance offer both appropriate and convenient living options.

A 2023 survey by the National Association of Realtors found that more than 50% of respondents would prefer to live within easy walking distance of essential destinations, such as shops and restaurants. These respondents indicated they would accept a smaller yard or choose to live in a townhouse or apartment in exchange for this walkable convenience. House-scale buildings with multiple units in walkable neighborhoods, such as duplexes, fourplexes and cottage courts – often referred to as "Missing Middle Housing" – can ideally be located near main street districts.

The two local examples on the right show how housing can be incorporated into a main street district.



A townhome development within walking distance of downtown Farmington.



Apartments on the second story and above in downtown Northville.

Land Use and Zoning

Parking

CHECKLIST

PARKING IS AVAILABLE THROUGH ON-STREET PARKING SPACES OR IN LOTS LOCATED BEHIND MAIN STREET.

To preserve the vibrant street-level atmosphere, vehicle access should be designed to avoid crossing main street sidewalks. Rear-lot parking is preferred, as it maintains the integrity of public space. Successful districts often feature high pedestrian activity—people strolling, window shopping, dining outdoors, walking pets, or socializing. In such settings, sidewalks serve as the primary public gathering space and the heart of downtown life.

When there is enough space in the right-of-way, on-street parking plays a valuable role. It offers convenient quick access to storefronts and acts as a buffer between pedestrians and moving traffic. Oftentimes along a main street the width of the right-of-way may change, allowing on-street parking in certain sections but not all.

Rear parking can be provided privately through zoning ordinance requirements or publicly via municipal lots. If rear parking isn't available, municipalities may explore options such as acquiring land for future public lots. These offer several benefits, easing the burden on business owners who may otherwise need to provide on-site parking or acquire additional land. This approach lowers startup costs and supports new business launches in the main street district.

The examples on the right show the impacts of on-street or rear lot parking along main streets. They also display how limiting vehicle crossings can promote safety in store front areas.



In this example from Oxford, parking is located on the street and in a rear lot.



In this example from Ferndale, on-street parking acts as a buffer between pedestrians on the sidewalk and moving traffic.

Land Use and Zoning

Implementation

- **Assess Public Spaces** – Review existing public spaces, including downtown parks and plazas, to evaluate usability and accessibility. If no such space currently exists, consider applying for a planning grant through organizations such as SEMCOG, the Project for Public Spaces (PPS), or other nonprofit or governmental entities.
- **Evaluate and Update Zoning Ordinances** – Review ordinances to ensure alignment with the context of main street districts. Consider updates that support mixed-use development, such as permitting residential units on second stories and adjacent streets. Facilitate infill by reducing setbacks, minimum building sizes, and parking requirements where appropriate.
- **Support Traditional Storefront Design** – Main streets often feature long, narrow buildings that enhance pedestrian engagement by offering a variety of storefronts within a short walking distance. Review zoning regulations to ensure they do not inadvertently prohibit this type of development.
- **Integrate Changes into Planning Documents** – Incorporate proposed changes into official planning documents, such as the Master Plan, Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), and Parks & Recreation Plan.
- **Conduct a Needs Assessment** – Perform a local needs assessment to identify opportunities for repurposing vacant or underutilized spaces.
- **Stay Informed on Funding Opportunities** – Subscribe to websites and mailing lists that provide updates on placemaking and public space grant opportunities. Refer to the resource section for recommended subscriptions.

Resources

- Planning Assistance Program – See page 12
- Placemaking: What If We Built Cities Around Places? –A handbook by the Project for Public Spaces (PPS), offering practical tools for shaping the public realm.
- AARP Livable Communities – A collection of resources for local leaders, including how-to guides and grant programs aimed at making communities more livable.
- Main Street America – The Main Street America website features grant and funding opportunities from Main Street America and its partner organizations.
- NAR Community and Transportation Preferences Surveys – A national survey conducted by the National Association of Realtors every three years, providing insights into housing and transportation preferences among American adults.
- Zoning Reform Toolkit – A free PDF guide from the Michigan Chapter of the American Planning Association, offering actionable tools for municipalities to expand housing options.
- Missing Middle Housing – A website offering examples and technical guidance on missing middle housing types that are often suitable for areas near Main Street.
- *Life Between Buildings – Using Public Space*, by Jan Gehl and *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, by William H. Whyte – These books explore the principles of effective public space design and the social dynamics of urban environments.

Mobility and Access

Walking or Biking to the District

CHECKLIST

THERE ARE SAFE AND CONVENIENT WAYS TO REACH THE DISTRICT BY BIKE OR ON FOOT FROM RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS LOCATED WITHIN HALF A MILE OF THE MAIN STREET.

A half-mile is generally the distance that most people will walk before opting to drive. For the average person, this distance takes about 10–12 minutes to walk. Walking needs to be a safe, accessible, and enjoyable way to reach the district.

Despite the demand for truly walkable neighborhoods—where one can safely and easily walk to shops and restaurants — they remain rare. Thoughtful planning can better connect residential areas to main streets and downtowns where these amenities are concentrated.

Even when residences are located nearby, they may be inaccessible due to missing sidewalks, lack of safe crossings, and other barriers resulting from poor or outdated site planning.



Farmington: A linear park is proposed to connect new townhomes to the downtown, and a public promenade is included in the site plan, for additional connectivity by foot to the downtown.

These barriers can be addressed through a mix of small, quick improvements and long-term planning.

Use free walk and bike audits to evaluate existing routes and test connections between residential neighborhoods and the district's main streets. See the resources section on page 32.

Simple, low-cost changes, such as repairing small sections of sidewalks, can be implemented quickly. Larger connectivity improvements can be addressed over time by planning for future road reconstruction projects, park or trail connections, and regulatory updates to the zoning code. Once nearby destinations are linked to main street through sidewalks or trails, it is important to review existing wayfinding signage and add new signs where needed.



Photo Credit: Project for Public Spaces

In addition, it is important to review existing wayfinding signage." Effective wayfinding helps visitors navigate easily between areas, guiding them to parks, museums, and other key locations. Well-designed signace improves accessibility, reinforces local branding, and highlights attractions that visitors might otherwise overlook.

Wayfinding signage in Ferndale. Signage can be at different scales and costs, including traditional signs or virtual kiosks.



Mobility and Access

CHECKLIST

THERE ARE SAFE AND CONVENIENT WALKING ROUTES TO NEARBY CULTURAL AND NATURAL DESTINATIONS.

According to the nonprofit Project for Public Spaces (PPS), "to be successful, cities need destinations."

A destination (e.g., a main street or downtown district) should offer at least 10 engaging places or activities, such as:

- Enjoying a coffee
- Walking a trail
- Meeting friends at a park
- Sitting and resting
- Experiencing art

These places should be thoughtfully connected to encourage exploration and extended visits.



Paint Creek Trail connection into downtown Rochester.

Identify and evaluate community assets and visitor attractions, such as local parks, waterfronts, and festival venues. Assess how well these assets are connected to the district and plan improvements where needed. Consider local and regional tourism and recreation patterns, recognizing that visitors often seek to experience multiple activities in one outing.

Downtown Rochester and downtown Lake Orion are local models (often referred to as Trail Towns). Both connect directly to the Paint Creek Trail, allowing visitors to enjoy nature walks or bike rides, and begin, or end, the visit at a local restaurant or shop in the downtown.

CHECKLIST

BIKE RACKS ARE EASY TO FIND AND LOCATED NEAR KEY DESTINATIONS INCLUDING RESTAURANTS, RETAIL, AND TRANSIT.

If the main street is served by public transit, consider placing bike racks or secure bike storage near bus stops.

This allows people to bike to the area, lock their bikes safely, and continue their journey by bus.



Bike racks in downtown Detroit

Mobility and Access

Placement matters: Bike racks should never block pedestrian pathways. Install racks in the furniture zone of sidewalks—this is the area designated for amenities like light posts, trees, and bike racks. Keep the pedestrian travel zone clear for safe and comfortable walking.

Design for security: Use racks that allow cyclists to lock the bike frame, not just the front wheel. For added protection, especially for e-bikes, consider installing bike lockers.

Adding bike racks is a low-cost improvement that encourages recreational visits and supports multimodal transportation.

Grants are often available for small infrastructure projects. Identify priority locations through a multimodal transportation plan or by conducting a bike audit. Documenting the need can help unlock funding opportunities.

As well, consider how design can add to local branding.



Downtown Madison Heights

Driving to the District

CHECKLIST

THERE ARE CLEARLY VISIBLE SIGNS THAT GUIDE DRIVERS TO SHARED PARKING AREAS.

Street parking in any community fills up quickly, so it's essential to have clear signage guiding visitors to nearby parking lots. Don't assume people, especially out-of-town visitors, know where to park. While local residents may be familiar with the area, visitors rely on visible, well-placed signs to find parking.

Good signage not only enhances the visitor experience but also benefits local businesses. When possible, a shared parking lot for the main street—managed by the city or local authority—can reduce the financial burden on individual businesses. Additionally, it's helpful to make parking information easy to find online—both on the city's website and on platforms such as Google Maps. Additionally, in areas served by public transit, signage and infrastructure should support and help visitors access and find downtown shops and services.



Clear parking directing people toward municipal lots near downtown is especially important for first-time visitors. In this example, the signage is easy to spot, clearly indicates free parking, and uses a recognizable round "P" symbol that drivers can quickly identify.

Mobility and Access

Implementation

- **Identify Nearby Neighborhoods** - Locate residential areas within a 0.5-mile radius of the district center. Focus on connecting these neighborhoods to the downtown.
- **Identify Nearby Destinations** – Consider other destinations that would benefit from connectivity to the downtown, such as regional parks, trails and waterfront access.
- **Conduct a Walkability Audit** - Use tools like the AARP Walk Audit Toolkit to assess how well nearby neighborhoods and community assets are connected to the district by foot. Evaluate the presence and condition of sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, and other infrastructure.
- **Conduct a Signage Audit** – Review signage for both automobiles and pedestrians. Do a "visitor audit" with a partner community or organization to see if the main street signage is easy to understand, and offer to do one for their community.
- **Engage Key Stakeholders** - Share findings with relevant partners, including public works, road commissions, and elected officials. Use the data to build support for improvements.
- **Integrate Findings into Planning Documents** – Incorporate recommendations into plans such as the downtown plan, multimodal transportation plan, or master plan.
- **Pursue Funding and Implementation Opportunities** - Apply for grants that support access and connectivity. Elements documented in formal plans will often open the door for funding down the road.

Resources

- Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Hub – This SEMCOG data hub includes maps, as well as examples of mobility plans from local communities.
- AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit & AARP Bike Audit Tool Kit – These free Tool Kits can be used to assess and report on the safety, walkability and bikeabilty of a street, intersection, or neighborhood.
- Mobility Technical Assistance – SEMCOG service that provides guidance on a range of mobility-related topics, including pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, traffic safety, public transit, and freight movement.
- Planning Assistance Program – See page 12
- Transportation Alternatives Program – See page 12
- AARP Livable Communities – See page 24
- Main Street America – See page 24
- Trail Towns – Trail-building toolbox and guide, with a focus on connecting towns to trails. Includes guidance on signage, amenities, and grants.

Green Space and Environment

Trees

CHECKLIST

SPECIES OF TREES ARE SUITABLE FOR A MAIN STREET SETTING. TREES ARE HEALTHY AND WELL-MAINTAINED.

Trees offer numerous benefits to a main street environment: The presence of trees improves residents' perception of safety and promotes use of public spaces; street trees help reduce vehicle speeds by 3 to 15 mph and contribute to fewer traffic crashes; visitors will spend 9-12% more on goods and services and stay longer in business districts with trees.[2]

Selecting appropriate tree species for a main street setting is essential. Not all species are suitable, as they require regular pruning and must be resilient to the challenges of a downtown environment, such as limited space, frequent human interaction, restricted water access, and constrained soil and underground conditions. Many species that live more than a century in forests average only 32 years in a city and 7 years in the core downtown.[3]

Planning the site well can improve the longevity of the tree, by increasing soil and water access, or through using engineered tree pit systems.

When selecting a tree species for a sidewalk planting, it is recommended to consult with a certified arborist to evaluate local conditions and determine the best options. Local communities and regional agencies have adopted lists of recommended tree species, based on site characteristics.

[2] *2025, Why Plant a Tree?, Macomb County.*

[3] *Plotnik, Arthur. 2000. "The Urban Tree Book: An Uncommon Field Guide for City and Town." New York: Three Rivers Press.*



Main street tree planted with a grate, allowing more water to reach the roots.

Examples include the Macomb County Commercial Streetscape Planting Guide, the Ann Arbor Approved Tree Species List, and the Ann Arbor Guidance Tree Species List Site Characteristics Suitability. Corridor plans may also include a lists of recommended species, such as the Sterling Heights North Van Dyke Avenue Master Plan.

Salt-tolerant tree species should be selected for sidewalks, with branches maintained at least eight feet above the ground for pedestrian clearance and 15 feet for vehicle clearance. Proper site preparation is essential to support water infiltration and healthy root growth. Sidewalk trees are best planted using grates or stormwater tree pits. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, grates help prevent sidewalk damage by allowing sufficient water to reach tree roots, reducing the likelihood of roots spreading and cracking pavement.[4] When thoughtfully designed and engineered, tree plantings can also be integrated into downtown stormwater management systems.

[4] *2017, Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access, U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration.*

Green Space and Environment

Trees

CHECKLIST

THE STREET TREES ARE POSITIONED BETWEEN STOREFRONTS AT SHARED WALLS, RATHER THAN DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF ENTRANCES OR SIGNAGE.

Trees should be planted in alignment with shared walls between buildings, rather than directly in front of storefronts or signage. Improper placement can obstruct visibility, making the location less attractive for businesses by potentially covering signage as trees mature. Existing business owners that are affected by the tree growth may request the tree is removed. While planners and designers may prefer evenly spaced trees, in a main street setting, it is more important to consider pedestrian-level visibility rather than uniform overhead spacing.



Well-planned street trees enhance the pedestrian experience by providing shade and creating a natural buffer between visitors and traffic.



Photo Credit: Destination Ann Arbor

Trees should be planted in alignment with shared walls between buildings, rather than directly in front of storefronts or signage. The example above is from downtown Milan.

It is important to know that tree planting in a main street setting requires significant planning and investment, particularly in paved areas. It is advisable to incorporate tree planting into long-term infrastructure plans. Tree planting should be viewed as part of a comprehensive downtown development strategy.

Green Space and Environment

Green Infrastructure and Stormwater

CHECKLIST

THE MUNICIPALITY HAS A FRAMEWORK TO SUPPORT GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IMPLEMENTATION FOR THE DISTRICT. THIS INCLUDES SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES TO MANAGE STORMWATER.

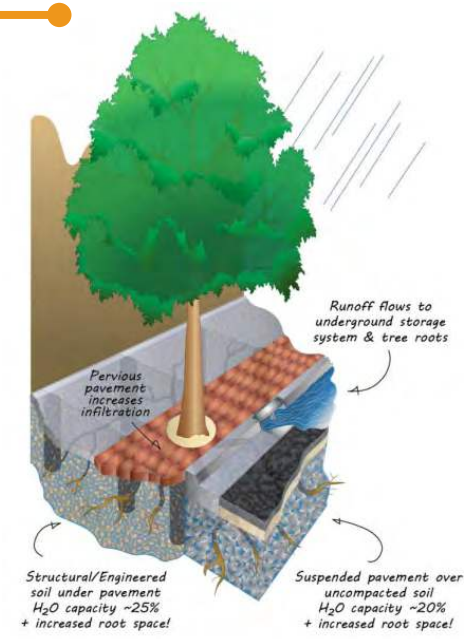
Low Impact Development (LID) is a stormwater management approach that mimics natural hydrology. It includes green stormwater infrastructure strategies that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, and slow runoff close to its source. This reduces the volume and pollution of stormwater runoff entering local infrastructure or discharging to nearby waterways. When integrated into site planning and design, green infrastructure also supports placemaking and community health goals.

Green infrastructure practices for downtown or main street contexts with high levels of impervious surfaces require early engineering considerations for the most suitable strategies. These may include:

- Street tree pits with integrated catch-basins
- Sidewalk planter boxes with bioretention techniques
- Curb bump outs and pedestrian refuge islands with bioretention techniques
- Permeable surfaces in alleys or parking lanes (used cautiously near building foundations)
- Other underground stormwater infrastructure that otherwise promotes storage and/or infiltration.

"Installing trees in locations that are engineered to retain stormwater is a great way to augment existing stormwater management systems, increasing their capacity and improving water quality."

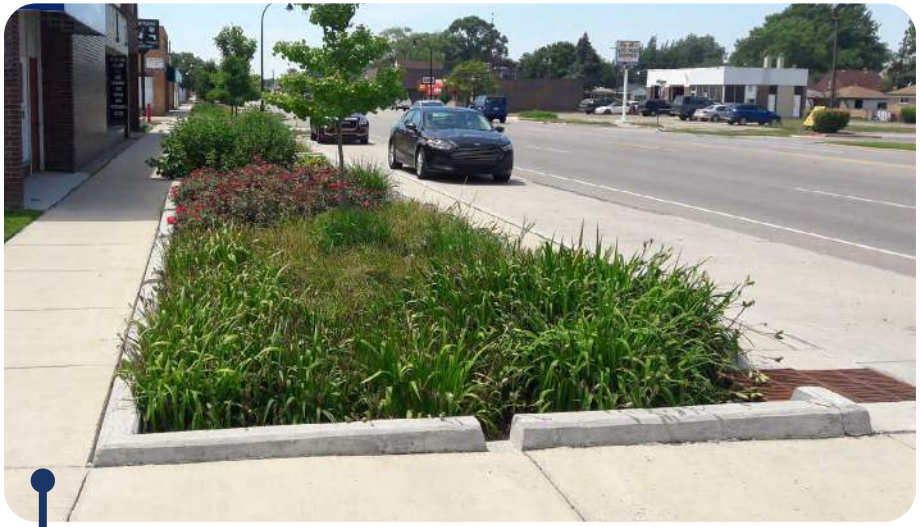
Stormwater to Street Trees



Sidewalk Trees with Integrated Stormwater Catch-Basins: For street trees to effectively contribute to stormwater management, good site design is essential. One effective solution is the use of stormwater tree pits with integrated catch basins. These are designed to capture and store water underground, leading to healthier trees and augmented stormwater management. The EPA's document Stormwater to Street Trees covers various types of stormwater management systems with trees.

Green Space and Environment

Sidewalk Planter Boxes: Bioretention techniques provide runoff reduction and water quality improvement, while also enhancing the look of the site. SEMCOG's Low Impact Development Manual for Michigan includes a fact sheet on planter boxes, along with information on the types of planter boxes that can be used on sidewalks. Chapter eight focuses on implementing LID in special areas and has examples of how to incorporate into urban street settings. For information on curb bump outs and pedestrian refuge islands see the next section.



Sidewalk green infrastructure bioretention in Allen Park captures and infiltrates stormwater from surrounding impervious surfaces. It also helps with traffic calming and serves as a buffer for pedestrians.

CHECKLIST

THE MUNICIPALITY HAS IMPLEMENTED GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN ALIGNMENT WITH TRAFFIC CALMING OPPORTUNITIES.

Green stormwater infrastructure can be integrated into pedestrian safety improvement plans along main streets. Examples include curb bump outs, which shorten crossing distances for pedestrians, and center pedestrian refuge islands. The Great Lakes Green Streets Guidebook states that "successful programs have linked transportation planning with stormwater management outcomes in order to strategically utilize funding opportunities."



Pedestrian refuge island in the Brooklands District in Rochester Hills gives a place to stop when crossing the street and is designed to capture stormwater.



Curb bump out in the Livernois-McNichols Main Street in Detroit reduces the crossing distance for pedestrians from four lanes to two lanes, while also acting as a reservoir for stormwater

Green Space and Environment

CHECKLIST

DRAINAGE AND FLOODING ISSUES IN THE DISTRICT ARE IDENTIFIED AND ADDRESSED IN PLANNING DOCUMENTS, SUCH AS CORRIDOR PLANS, STORMWATER PLANS, AND SUSTAINABILITY PLANS.

Coordinate with local engineers to determine appropriate green infrastructure alternatives and any regulatory requirements. Planning for street trees and green stormwater infrastructure in a main street district is a complex process. It typically requires collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including the road commission, public works departments, engineers, landscape architects, and downtown management officials.



The Dearborn Peace Park project – the creation of three new parks across the city – integrates passive recreation, spaces for small business pop-ups and events, and innovative stormwater management techniques.

To ensure success, it is important to discuss goals early and incorporate them into key planning documents—such as master plans, policy documents, and corridor plans. Including these strategies in official municipal plans not only helps align stakeholders and foster collaboration but also increases opportunities for securing funding. Here are some examples from the region:

- North Van Dkye Avenue Master Plan, Sterling Heights
- City of Ann Arbor Policy Statement on Stormwater Management Guidelines for Public Street Construction and Reconstruction
- Royal Oak Sustainability and Climate Action Plan





This rain garden is integrated into the South Main Street streetscape in Royal Oak. It allows stormwater runoff to enter and infiltrate under normal conditions, while a catch basin structure provides additional capacity during larger rain events.

Green Space and Environment

Implementation

- **Define Clear Goals:** Establish specific objectives for tree planting and green infrastructure — such as improving stormwater management, enhancing pedestrian safety, or increasing urban canopy coverage.
- **Engage Regional Partners Early** — Schedule a consultation with SEMCOG to explore technical assistance, funding opportunities, and alignment with regional priorities.
- **Collaborate with Design Experts** — Work with engineers, landscape architects, and arborists to develop site-specific designs that incorporate Low Impact Development (LID) principles and green infrastructure best practices.
- **Coordinate with Infrastructure Projects** — Integrate tree and stormwater infrastructure planning into streetscape renovations, road repairs, and underground utility upgrades to reduce costs and construction impacts.
- **Evaluate local master plans, corridor plans, zoning ordinances and downtown development strategies** — Conduct a code audit to ensure flexibility exists to integrate green infrastructure into these highly urbanized areas.
- **Embed in Municipal Planning Documents** — Ensure LID and green infrastructure strategies are formally adopted into master plans, corridor plans, and downtown development strategies to support long-term implementation and funding eligibility.

Resources

- Stormwater to Street Trees: Engineering Urban Forests for Stormwater Management – EPA guide covering the role of trees in stormwater management, along with design strategies and examples.
- Development Manual for Michigan: A Design Guide for Implementers and Reviewers – SEMCOG publication on how to apply LID to managing stormwater runoff. Chapter eight focuses on implementing LID in special areas and has examples of how to incorporate into urban street settings.
- Great Lakes Green Streets Guidebook: A Compilation of Road Projects Using Green Infrastructure – SEMCOG publication featuring road projects that integrate green infrastructure for stormwater control.
- Tackling Barriers to Green Infrastructure: An Audit of Local Codes and Ordinances – A tool for municipalities to use to identify codes and ordinances that hinder green stormwater infrastructure placement.
- Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access Website – U.S. DOT FHWA website with guidance on sidewalk design, including sidewalk tree planting best practices.
- Why Plant a Tree? – Macomb County webpage providing an overview of the health, community, and environmental benefits of trees.
- Planning Assistance Program – See page 12
- Transportation Alternatives Program – See page 12

Image and Character

Art, History and Culture:

CHECKLIST

LOCAL HISTORY AND CULTURE ARE REPRESENTED THROUGH ELEMENTS SUCH AS HISTORIC MARKERS, SIGNAGE OR PUBLIC ART. CULTURAL ASSETS ARE INTEGRATED INTO THE DISTRICT TO CREATE A UNIQUE SENSE OF PLACE.



This freighter propeller, recovered from the St. Clair River north of Marine City, sits in a park facing the main street. It highlights the city's shipbuilding past and, along with other downtown artifacts, shares its rich maritime history with residents and visitors.

People enjoy visiting destinations with a unique sense of place. Consider famous destinations such as Venice, Italy or Times Square in New York City, or small towns that have a historical and local charm. When looking to create downtowns and main streets that will succeed as destinations, it is important that they have a unique and genuine character.

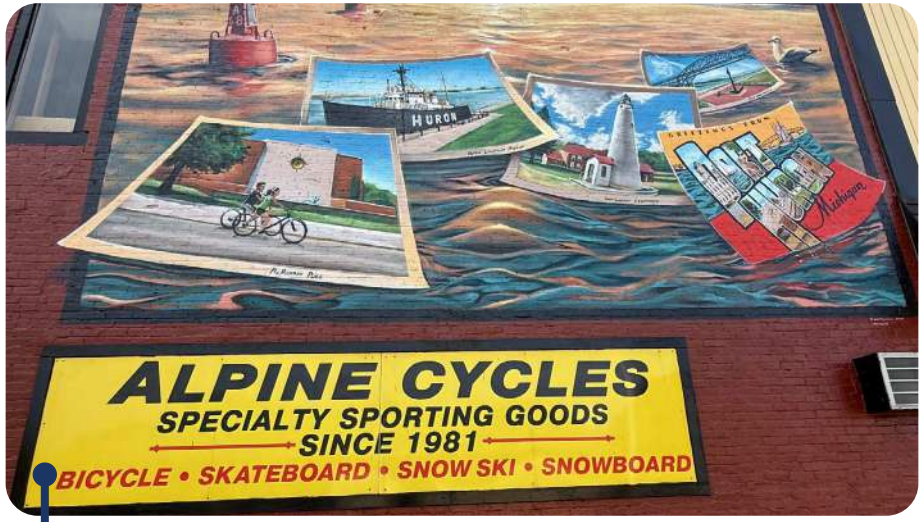
In addition to highlighting local history and culture, developing new, unique, and engaging places is essential for drawing visitors to the district. These could include features like a playful urban park, a creatively designed alleyway, or a seasonal ice-skating rink. Such spaces transform a commercial district into an experiential one—inviting people not just to shop or dine, but to linger, explore, and enjoy.

These environments also offer excellent opportunities for social media engagement. Visitors are often inspired to take and share photos, especially in front of eye-catching elements like murals or installations. This organic sharing attracts even more people, turning the district into a destination.



The Alley District in downtown Howell is a vibrant placemaking success, known for its seasonal décor, intimate layout, and popularity on social media. The inviting space encourages visitors to explore and share their experiences.

Image and Character



The mural "Postcards from Port Huron" by artist Kevin Burdick celebrates the city's history by featuring iconic Port Huron locations.

Finally, an essential strategy for strengthening established districts is the repair and restoration of existing buildings—both historic and non-historic—whenever feasible. Preserving a diverse mix of building types and ages enhances the character of the area and contributes to its economic resilience. This diversity supports a range of local businesses and provides varied spaces in terms of size, function, and aesthetic appeal.

Beyond their economic impact, restored buildings also serve a powerful placemaking function. Retaining and highlighting original architectural elements can reinforce local identity and attract visitors. Thoughtful restoration can incorporate historical details that help tell the story of the community and make it a more unique and interesting place to visit. In addition, the restored buildings themselves can become symbolic icons in the downtown, used in marketing and branding materials.



Once a water tower, the clocktower in downtown Chelsea has been used for many other purposes, including as a wedding venue and for offices. The building is also an icon, often used in logos and photos.

CHECKLIST

LOCAL ORDINANCES ALLOW FOR SIDEWALK SALES, FESTIVALS, AND OUTDOOR DINING.

When space allows, sidewalk sales, festivals and outdoor dining are attractive uses that draw people in. Challenges can arise when the right-of-way is narrow, when traffic speeds are too high, or when these activities are not allowed due to local ordinances or road jurisdiction.

Slow speeds and planning for safety are key to moving towards allowing more placemaking activities on main street. If the road is not under local jurisdiction, start by reaching out to the appropriate entity and express community goals. If unsure of which entity to contact, SEMCOG can assist with introductions. Moving in the direction of more placemaking activities is oftentimes a long process, especially when numerous partners are involved.

Image and Character

Streetscape Appearance:

CHECKLIST

PUBLIC AMENITIES SUCH AS TRASH CANS, FLOWER BEDS, AND STREETLIGHTS ARE WELL-MAINTAINED AND IN GOOD WORKING CONDITION. LITTER IS REGULARLY PICKED UP TO KEEP THE AREA CLEAN.

While new parks, streetscape projects, and public spaces often attract excitement and funding, ongoing maintenance is just as important, though less glamorous. Without consistent upkeep—such as landscaping, litter cleanup, and repairs to broken fixtures—large investments can quickly lose their impact.

These maintenance tasks are often relatively low-cost, but challenges can arise when responsibilities are unclear or when no budget has been set aside for basic repairs or cleaning. Identifying which entity, department or organization is accountable for each element of the public space is a critical first step.

In general, main streets with lots of visits and activity need oversight by a dedicated organization, which may be a government entity such as a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) or a nonprofit organization. This ensures that someone is actively managing and maintaining the space. Without such oversight main street districts and other key public areas risk falling into neglect. The Project for Public Spaces (PPS) offers valuable guidance on forming partnerships and emphasizes the importance of maintenance and oversight in successful placemaking.



The Hamtramck Downtown Development Authority's Hamtramck Night Bazaar was a series of evening events that attracted residents and visitors to shop local and dine. This outdoor activity brought people together and created a memorable event to enjoy, while promoting small businesses.



Clean sidewalks, vibrant planters with healthy greenery, and well-maintained trash receptacles all shape the look and feel of main street, creating a welcoming environment and a strong first impression.

Image and Character

Implementation

- **Celebrate Local History through Placemaking** — Explore and showcase the community's unique history using public art, historical artifacts, and placemaking initiatives. These efforts help reinforce a sense of identity and pride while creating engaging spaces for residents and visitors.
- **Design Memorable Public Spaces** — Develop plans for distinctive and inviting places that reflect the character of Main Street. Utilize free tools and guides from organizations like the Project for Public Spaces to support community-led design and activation.
- **Pursue Funding Opportunities** — Apply for placemaking grants and subscribe to newsletters from organizations that offer financial and technical support for community development. (See resource list below for suggestions.)
- **Support Historic Preservation and Building Maintenance** - Consider incentive programs that help maintain and restore existing downtown buildings. These may include façade improvement grants, tax incentives, or economic development programs aimed at preserving and renovating existing structures.
- **Navigate Regulatory Barriers to Activation** — If local ordinances restrict activities such as festivals, sidewalk sales, or outdoor dining due to external road jurisdiction, begin by identifying the responsible agency. Schedule a meeting to share the community's vision and explore collaborative solutions. SEMCOG's transportation experts can assist with initiating these conversations and provide relevant data, such as average daily traffic counts.

Resources

- SEMCOG's Regional Update – SEMCOG's bi-weekly newsletter supports local government effectiveness and regional progress in Southeast Michigan. It includes grant announcements relevant to local governments.
- Main Street America – See page 24
- AARP Livable Communities – See page 24
- Michigan SHPO Fact Sheet – A brief overview of the National Register of Historic Places, local historic districts, legal protections, and available resources for historic places.
- Redevelopment Ready Communities Guide for Local Incentive Policies - This guide covers local incentive policies such as tax abatements, reduced or waived fees, and façade grants or loans, which can support building rehabilitation efforts.
- Project for Public Spaces – A non-profit organization that is a central hub of the global placemaking movement. It has a newsletter with resources and grants and offers several training programs online.
- Main Street Solution Center Guide to Cleanup and Maintenance – Offers resources and strategy related to trash and recycling collection, street and sidewalk cleaning, landscaping, green space maintenance, and other essential upkeep for vibrant main street districts.

Business Support and Innovation

Local Assistance

CHECKLIST

A DESIGNATED POINT OF CONTACT FOR BUSINESS SUPPORT EXISTS WITHIN THE DISTRICT, PROVIDED EITHER BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OR THROUGH A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION.

The success of main street districts and downtown areas is closely tied to effective management. These areas are dynamic environments that encompass a range of functions, including commercial activity, business support, public space maintenance, and community events.

To support this complexity, it is essential to establish a clear and accessible point of contact for business support. This role may be fulfilled by a Downtown Development Manager, the Executive Director of a nonprofit main street organization, or another qualified individual appointed by the municipality or through a strong partnership with a nonprofit entity.



Photo Credit: Rochester Downtown Development Authority

The Rochester Downtown Development Authority (above) assists new and existing businesses with finding a location, grants, and direct one-on-one assistance.

Personalized, one-on-one assistance is a critical factor in helping small businesses navigate challenges and seize opportunities.

CHECKLIST

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROVIDES A HOW-TO GUIDE FOR OPENING A BUSINESS.

Local governments play a critical role in facilitating the successful launch of small and local businesses. One effective strategy is to provide a comprehensive, easy-to-follow guide outlining the steps required to open a business.

Main street districts and downtown areas are often good environments for first-time brick-and-mortar establishments, thanks to high pedestrian traffic, popularity, and smaller building footprints. Municipalities with such districts should recognize that many entrepreneurs may be navigating this process for the first time. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that guidance on business establishment is clear, consistent, and coordinated across departments and staff contacts.

Publishing a formal guide that details the necessary procedures—such as building inspections, business licensing, permitting, and other regulatory requirements—can significantly streamline the process for new business owners.

Garden City has published both a printed document and a concise webpage with step-by-step instructions on how to open a business.



Business Support and Innovation

Local Assistance

CHECKLIST

LAND-USE REGULATIONS ARE WRITTEN IN A WAY TO SUPPORT STARTUPS, SMALL BUSINESSES, AND A VARIETY OF BUSINESS TYPES.

The cost of opening a business on main street includes not only the products and staffing, but also local regulatory fees and, in most cases, building renovation costs. These layered expenses can pose significant barriers for entrepreneurs transitioning from home-based or hobby businesses to full-time operations. However, fostering the growth of local businesses—often referred to as economic gardening—can lead to a more stable business mix and greatly benefit the local economy.

Local jurisdictions can do their part to assist small businesses and entrepreneurs. For example, allowing micro retail – such as businesses with a small physical footprint or temporary footprint – can go a long way in lowering the real estate costs and assist in making the transitions needed to scale a business. The Micro Retail on Main Street publication developed by the Main Street Solution Center suggests working with property owners to subdivide larger retail spaces into smaller, more affordable units and to allow for pop-up shops so that business owners can test their products and gauge interest.



Iggy's Eggies is a walk-up-window only restaurant in downtown Detroit, operating out of a small physical space.

Historically, zoning regulations have separated industrial uses from main street areas to protect the public from the impacts of heavy industry. While well-intentioned, this separation has unintentionally restricted small-scale artisan manufacturing—such as local chocolate makers, clothing designers, and specialty producers—which can thrive in downtown settings. Communities should review their zoning codes to ensure that non-polluting, low-impact production is permitted in downtown and adjacent districts, when such activities do not generate excessive noise, traffic, or other negative externalities, and especially when these businesses also have a retail component.

Business Support and Innovation

Implementation

- **Identify Key Contacts** — Determine the primary points of contact and key personnel responsible for assisting new businesses. Ensure these individuals are empowered to provide meaningful support and that their contact information is easily accessible to the public.
- **Partner with Non-Profit Organizations** — Establish partnerships with one or more non-profit organizations to offer essential business support services—such as accounting, marketing, and startup guidance—especially for new entrepreneurs and small businesses.
- **Review and Update Regulations** — Examine existing ordinances and land use policies to identify opportunities for increased flexibility while preserving essential regulatory components. For example, consider whether small-scale artisan manufacturing and micro-retail are permitted, and make adjustments to support these business types where appropriate.
- **Maintain a Clear and Accessible Business Guide** — Keep an up-to-date "How to Open a Business" handout and webpage that clearly outlines all necessary steps and departments involved in starting a business within the city. Ensure the guide is easy to find and understand.

Resources

- Building a Community Entrepreneurial Ecosystem: A Self-Guided Tour for Communities – A comprehensive toolkit developed by Main Street America, this resource includes templates and a self-guided audit designed to help communities assess and strengthen their local entrepreneurial ecosystem, particularly within Main Street districts.
- Making Space for Every Entrepreneur – Published by the Michigan Municipal League (MML), this policy brief explores the local government's role in unlocking new opportunities for entrepreneurs through planning and policy.
- Micro Retail on Main Street – Developed by the Main Street Solution Center, this resource outlines targeted approaches for supporting small-scale retail businesses, emphasizing small spaces, pop-up shops, niche markets, retail incubators, and the like.
- Microbusiness Best Practices: The Comprehensive Playbook for Municipalities to Support Microbusinesses – This playbook, published by the Michigan Municipal League, presents a detailed set of five best practices and actionable steps for municipalities seeking to strengthen their microbusiness and entrepreneurial sector.
- Supporting Business Startups – This guide, produced by the Main Street Solution Center, offers practical tools for municipalities and other organizations to support new business ventures in downtown and main street districts.

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